

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 11. cancel

12. (new): Method for continuous direct casting of a metal strip according to which said strip is cast by solidification of liquid metal in an ingot mould with cooled, moving walls, said strip is then given in-line hot rolling, wherein a product is applied to the surface of the strip as it exits the ingot mould, which leaves a lubricant layer on said surface subsisting during the time the strip is hot rolled and causing release of gases contributing towards the protection of said surface from oxidation.

13. (new): Method as in claim 12, wherein said lubricant layer is a carbonaceous material.

14. (new): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is graphite.

15. (new): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is a grease containing calcium carbonate.

16. (new): Method as in claim 13, wherein said product leaving a lubricant layer to subsist is acetylene.

17. (new): Method as in claim 12, wherein hot rolling is conducted with a reduction rate of at least 50%.

18. (new): Method as in claim 12, wherein said liquid metal is a ferrous alloy.

19. (new): Plant for the continuous direct casting of a thin metal strip, of the type comprising an ingot mould with cooled, moving walls in which solidification of said strip occurs, and an in-line hot rolling unit for said solidified strip, wherein it comprises means for applying a product to the surface of said strip as it exits the ingot mould which leaves a lubricant layer subsisting on said surface as it enters the hot rolling unit.

20. (new): Plant as in claim 19, wherein said moving walls are the side walls of two rolls rotating in opposite directions.

21. (new): Plant as in claim 19, wherein said moving walls are two moving belts.

22. (new): Plant as in claim 19, comprising an inertization chamber for said strip between its exit from the ingot mould and its entry into the hot rolling unit.